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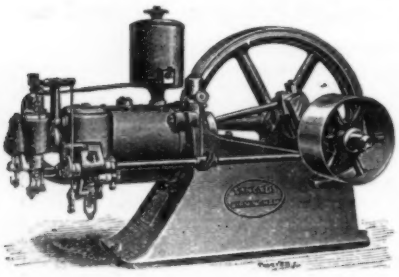

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The annual general meeting was held Thursday at Winchester House, Mr. G. Darlington Simpson presiding. The Chairman, in moving the adoption of the report, reminded the shareholders that in the year under review, to December 31 last, the company worked in somewhat adverse circumstances in connection with the change of management. When he arrived on the property in April, 1902, he found that his visit had been already anticipated, and the conclusion had been arrived at that one of the objects of his mission would be to look very closely into the management. He would not cast any reflections on those in charge of various departments who left the company's service in July last, but he would ask the shareholders when going through the accounts not to take the figures relating to costs as any criterion of what they would be in the future. The issued capital was £300,000, and, as he regarded that meeting as a general kind of "clean-up" of the past, it would be interesting to the shareholders to know where their capital now was. The mining property, which was a very large one, had cost them altogether £204,000, and the preliminary expenses were £15,000; on machinery, plant, electric lighting, buildings, railway, &c., the outlay had been about £152,000; on developments £50,000 had been spent; and the stores in hand now stood at £7,200. Those figures made a total of about £436,000, which was further increased by certain other items to a round sum of about £450,000. Thus the whole of their capital was accounted for, *plus* £150,000 received from other sources, and large sums in addition had been spent out of revenue and in writings off for depreciation. The directors, in fact, had been deprived from distributing among the shareholders about £50,000 which had been earned by the company, but the board had considered the course they had taken in this matter a wiser one in the real interests of the shareholders than that of increasing the share capital or of creating debentures. In 1900 the amount owing by them to the bank was £9,000, and in 1901 it was £20,000, but the present balance-sheet showed that not only had that indebtedness been entirely paid off, but that the company had at their bankers £7,400. Sundry creditors, too, had been reduced from £10,145 to £6,236 in the present balance-sheet, and within a few days of the closing of the accounts on December 31 last the directors received a cablegram from the manager informing them that he had practically paid off everything and had started the present year with a clean slate. The proceeds of the gold extracted last year amounted, roughly, to £128,000. The expenses in Australia per ton of ore raised from the inception of the company worked out in 1898 at £4 12s. 8d., in 1899 at £3 7s. 3d., in 1900 at £2 13s. 1d., in 1901 at £1 18s. 10d., and in 1902 at £1 12s. 7d.; and similar reductions went on in the expenses per ton in London, which in the several years he had mentioned amounted respectively to 11s. 7d., 5s. 1d., 6s. 3d., 2s. 7d., and 1s. It would thus be seen that a very remarkable decrease had taken place in the expenses, and from figures which had been received from the manager this year he found that the total costs worked out to-day at about 21s. a ton. The greatest praise was due to their general manager, Mr. Hall, for having thus brought down the expenses in Australia, and the advantage of the reduction would at once be realised by the shareholders when they remembered that the company were now working at a cost of about 6 dwt., so that all the ore treated over 6 dwt. meant a profit to them. It was very trying to show a profit for the year of £23,583 and not to have distributed it in dividend, but the money had been spent out of revenue on capital account. The year's profit and the amount brought forward made a total of £49,804, from which £27,041 had been written off as follows: Depreciation on machinery £6,365, £10,000 proportion of development expenses, £7,138 the balance of the preliminary expenses, and £3,537 had been reserved for income-tax and gold tax. They then had a balance of £22,763 to carry forward. The production of gold in 1902 was 33,623 oz., compared with 21,271 oz. for 1901. The increase was still keeping up, there having been an improvement on the first four months this year of 1,674 oz., as compared with the production for the corresponding period of 1902. He thought that a property must be regarded as a good one which in so short a period and working under so many disadvantages had produced gold of the value of £500,000, which, moreover, had been obtained from only an infinitesimal portion of the property. Mr. Hall had achieved remarkable success in a very short period, and he had worked the mine to such advantage during the first three months of this year that he had enabled the directors to pay a dividend of 1s. a share on the entire capital. The same profitable working had been going on in the two months which had elapsed since this dividend was declared. Every foot that had been sunk and driven had proved the increasing value of the property. The plant and machinery were in very satisfactory condition, and their bugbear in the past—lack of water—had, he believed, been overcome for all time. Mr. J. Cameron Swan seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously after the chairman had replied to a few questions.

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